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HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATIONS AND REPORTS OF SPECIAL RAPPORTEURS AND REPRESENTATIVES

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-third year

Letter dated 20 July 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to bring to your attention the statement issued on 17 July 1998 by the President of the European Union on the report of the United Nations inquiry into human rights violations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (the former Zaire).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, under item 113 (c) of the provisional agenda, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Ernst SUCHARIPA
Permanent Representative
of Austria to the United Nations

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Annex

[Original: English and French]

Statement by the President of the European Union on the report of the United Nations inquiry into human rights violations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (the former Zaire), issued on 17 July 1998

The European Union is gravely preoccupied with the findings contained in the report of the United Nations Secretary-General's investigative team charged with the inquiry into violations of human rights and humanitarian law in Zaire/the Democratic Republic of the Congo and welcomes the United Nations Security Council Presidential Statement of 13 July. The European Union strongly condemns all massacres and other atrocities committed before, during and after the military campaign which led to the overthrow of the former Zairian regime.

The European Union is concerned about the difficulties that the investigative team encountered in carrying out its task and supports the recommendation that further investigation of alleged atrocities should be carried out. Recognizing that the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda stressed in their reactions the incomplete and inconclusive nature of the report, the European Union urges both Governments to make a clear commitment to allow an independent and thorough inquiry without further delay. The European Union is looking forward to such a commitment and will follow closely its implementation.

The European Union welcomes the United Nations Secretary-General's decision to convey the report to the members of the international Panel of Eminent Personalities to investigate the 1994 genocide and surrounding events, established by the Organization of African Unity. The European Union looks forward to any recommendations of this Panel regarding the completion of the investigation into human rights violations in the region.

The European Union stresses the importance of putting an end to impunity if reconciliation and lasting peace is to be achieved in the Great Lakes region. Investigating all allegations of human rights violations and bringing those responsible to justice are indispensable parts of these efforts.

Without prejudice to the need for the completion of an independent inquiry, the European Union urges the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda to investigate within the framework of their own judicial systems the allegations contained in the report of the United Nations Secretary-General's investigative team, and to bring to justice those responsible for crimes against humanity and other violations of human rights and humanitarian law. In this respect, the European Union welcomes the commitment of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to carry out its own inquiry. The European Union is ready to provide technical assistance to support this initiative.

The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union, Cyprus and the countries of the European Free Trade Association, members of the European Economic Area align themselves with this declaration.